

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please replace the fourth paragraph starting on page 16 and bridging pages 16 and 17 with the following:

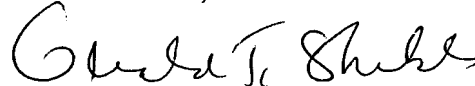
US British patent No. 736,818 makes a claim for the reduction of 3-keto- Δ^4 - steroids to 5 β -H steroids with a palladium catalyst, in the presence of an inorganic base and in an anhydrous medium. The preferred solvent is methanol and the preferred base is potassium hydroxide. Diosgenone is not exemplified. We find that diosgenone is poorly soluble in alcohols (specifically ethanol), which would render this process very dilute. Such a method also requires an extractive work-up procedure.

Please replace the first full paragraph on page 17 with the following:

US British patent No. 763,301 makes a reference to the utility of alkali (*i.e.* sodium or potassium hydroxide) in increasing the amount of 5 β -H product in the reduction of 3-keto- Δ^4 - steroids. This patent makes a specific claim for the utility of triethylamine in this context. Of the solvents chosen ethanol, ether, ethyl acetate and methylcyclohexane are cited, with 1,4-dioxane being the preferred solvent.

Respectfully submitted,

WELSH & KATZ, LTD.



Gerald T. Shekleton
Registration No. 27,466

Dated: May 23, 2005
Welsh & Katz, Ltd.
120 South Riverside Plaza, 22nd Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60606
Telephone: (312) 655-1500